AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

1 - 44. (canceled).

45. (previously presented): A battery separator consisting essentially of a nonwoven fabric having a substantially unilayered structure, wherein an apparent total surface area of fibers per a surface density of said nonwoven fabric is 20 m^2 or more, a thickness of said nonwoven fabric is 0.1 mm or less, a uniformity index of said nonwoven fabric is 0.15 or less, said nonwoven fabric consists essentially of non-fibrillated fibers, said nonwoven fabric contains fine fibers having a fiber diameter of 4 μm or less and high-modulus fibers having a Young's modulus of 50 cN/dtex or more, the fibers forming the nonwoven fabric are fixed substantially only by fusing the fibers to each other, the high-modulus fibers are composed of ultra-high-molecular-weight polyethylene, and the fine fibers are formed from island components remaining after removing a sea component from islands-in-sea composite fibers.

46. (previously presented): A battery separator consisting essentially of a nonwoven fabric having a substantially unilayered structure, wherein an apparent total surface area of fibers per a surface density of said nonwoven fabric is 20 m^2 or more, a thickness of said nonwoven fabric is 0.1 mm or less, a uniformity index of said nonwoven fabric is 0.15 or less, said

nonwoven fabric consists essentially of non-fibrillated fibers, said nonwoven fabric contains fine fibers having a fiber diameter of 4 μm or less and high-modulus fibers having a Young's modulus of 50 cN/dtex or more and a fiber length of 0.5 to 30 mm, the fibers forming the nonwoven fabric are fixed substantially only by fusing the fibers to each other, the high-modulus fibers are composed of high-crystalline polypropylene, and the fine fibers are formed from island components remaining after removing a sea component from islands-in-sea composite fibers.

47. (previously presented): A battery separator consisting essentially of a nonwoven fabric having a substantially unilayered structure, wherein an apparent total surface area of fibers per a surface density of said nonwoven fabric is 20 m^2 or more, a thickness of said nonwoven fabric is 0.1 mm or less, a uniformity index of said nonwoven fabric is 0.15 or less, said nonwoven fabric consists essentially of non-fibrillated fibers, said nonwoven fabric contains fine fibers having a fiber diameter of 4 μm or less and high-modulus fibers having a Young's modulus of 50 cN/dtex or more, the fibers forming the nonwoven fabric are fixed substantially only by fusing the fibers to each other, the high-modulus fibers are composite fibers composed of high-crystalline polypropylene and having a surface of a polyethylene-based resin, and the fine fibers are formed from island components remaining after removing a sea component from islands-in-sea composite fibers.

48. (previously presented): The battery separator according to claim 45, wherein the nonwoven fabric contains fusible fibers.

49. (previously presented): The battery separator according to claim 46, wherein the nonwoven fabric contains fusible fibers.

50. (previously presented): The battery separator according to claim 45, wherein an average fiber diameter of the high-modulus fibers is 5 times or more an average fiber diameter of the fine fibers.

51. (previously presented): The battery separator according to claim 46, wherein an average fiber diameter of the high-modulus fibers is 5 times or more an average fiber diameter of the fine fibers.

52. (previously presented): The battery separator according to claim 47, wherein an average fiber diameter of the high-modulus fibers is 5 times or more an average fiber diameter of the fine fibers.

53 (previously presented): The battery separator according to claim 45, wherein an average fiber length of the high-modulus fibers is 2.5 times or more an average fiber length of the fine fibers.

54. (previously presented): The battery separator according to claim 46, wherein an average fiber length of the high-modulus fibers is 2.5 times or more an average fiber length of the fine fibers.

55. (previously presented): The battery separator according to claim 47, wherein an average fiber length of the high-modulus fibers is 2.5 times or more an average fiber length of the fine fibers.

56. (previously presented): The battery separator according to claim 45, wherein a maximum pore size in the nonwoven fabric is 40 μm or less.

57. (previously presented): The battery separator according to claim 46, wherein a maximum pore size in the nonwoven fabric is 40 μm or less.

58. (previously presented): The battery separator according to claim 47, wherein a maximum pore size in the nonwoven fabric is 40 μm or less.

59. (previously presented): A battery separator consisting essentially of a nonwoven fabric having a substantially unilayered structure, wherein an apparent total surface area of fibers per a surface density of said nonwoven fabric is 20 m^2 or more, a thickness of said nonwoven fabric is 0.1 mm or less, a uniformity index of said nonwoven fabric is 0.15 or less, said

nonwoven fabric consists essentially of non-fibrillated fibers, said nonwoven fabric contains fine fibers having a fiber diameter of 4 μm or less and high-modulus fibers having a Young's modulus of 50 cN/dtex or more, the fibers forming the nonwoven fabric are fixed substantially only by fusing the fibers to each other, the high-modulus fibers are composed of ultra-high-molecular-weight polyethylene, and said nonwoven fabric consists essentially of polyolefin-based fibers.

60. (previously presented): A battery separator consisting essentially of a nonwoven fabric having a substantially unilayered structure, wherein an apparent total surface area of fibers per a surface density of said nonwoven fabric is 20 m^2 or more, a thickness of said nonwoven fabric is 0.1 mm or less, a uniformity index of said nonwoven fabric is 0.15 or less, said nonwoven fabric consists essentially of non-fibrillated fibers, said nonwoven fabric contains fine fibers having a fiber diameter of 4 μm or less and high-modulus fibers having a Young's modulus of 50 cN/dtex or more and a fiber length of 0.5 to 30 mm, the fibers forming the nonwoven fabric are fixed substantially only by fusing the fibers to each other, the high-modulus fibers are composed of high-crystalline polypropylene, and said nonwoven fabric consists essentially of polyolefin-based fibers.

61. (previously presented): A battery separator consisting essentially of a nonwoven fabric having a substantially unilayered structure, wherein an apparent total surface area of fibers per a surface density of said nonwoven fabric is 20 m^2 or more, a thickness of said nonwoven

fabric is 0.1 mm or less, a uniformity index of said nonwoven fabric is 0.15 or less, said nonwoven fabric consists essentially of non-fibrillated fibers, said nonwoven fabric contains fine fibers having a fiber diameter of 4 μm or less and high-modulus fibers having a Young's modulus of 50 cN/dtex or more, the fibers forming the nonwoven fabric are fixed substantially only by fusing the fibers to each other, the high-modulus fibers are composite fibers composed of high-crystalline polypropylene and having a surface of a polyethylene-based resin, and said nonwoven fabric consists essentially of polyolefin-based fibers.

62. (previously presented): The battery separator according to claim 59, wherein the nonwoven fabric contains fusible fibers.

63. (previously presented): The battery separator according to claim 60, wherein the nonwoven fabric contains fusible fibers.

64. (currently amended): The battery separator according to claim 59, wherein ~~the nonwoven fabric contains fusible~~ an average fiber diameter of the high-modulus fibers is 5 times or more an average fiber diameter of the fine fibers.

65. (currently amended): The battery separator according to claim 60, wherein ~~the nonwoven fabric contains fusible~~ an average fiber diameter of the high-modulus fibers is 5 times or more an average fiber diameter of the fine fibers.

66. (currently amended): The battery separator according to claim 61, wherein ~~the nonwoven fabric contains fusible~~ an average fiber diameter of the high-modulus fibers is 5 times or more an average fiber diameter of the fine fibers.

67. (previously presented): The batter separator according to claim 59, wherein an average fiber length of the high-modulus fibers is 2.5 times or more an average fiber length of the fine fibers.

68. (previously presented): The batter separator according to claim 60, wherein an average fiber length of the high-modulus fibers is 2.5 times or more an average fiber length of the fine fibers.

69. (previously presented): The batter separator according to claim 61, wherein an average fiber length of the high-modulus fibers is 2.5 times or more an average fiber length of the fine fibers.

70. (previously presented): The battery separator according to claim 59, wherein a maximum pore size in the nonwoven fabric is 40 μm or less.

71. (previously presented): The battery separator according to claim 60, wherein a maximum pore size in the nonwoven fabric is 40 μm or less.

72. (previously presented): The battery separator according to claim 61, wherein a maximum pore size in the nonwoven fabric is 40 μm or less.